

AVALANCHE ADVISORY

U.S. FOREST SERVICE	FORECASTER: Davis
IDAHO PANHANDLE AVALANCHE CENTER	EFFECTIVE DATE: 12/16/2011
DATE ISSUED: 12/16/2011 0730	OUTLOOK: 12/16-17/2011
This report does not apply to local ski areas within the forecast region and the hazard rating will remain valid through midnight December 16, 2011. Special thanks to Idaho Parks and recreation for sponsoring this avalanche advisory.	Thanks to the folks who have been sending in observations and the pit data from the Schweitzer and Silver Mountain.


WEATHER

TODAY: A 20% chance of light snow in the mountains across our forecast region, with temperatures in the high 20s and light SW winds. 48 hour snowfall is about 3 inches across North Idaho.


TONIGHT: Becoming mostly cloudy with 20% chance of snow to the north, temperatures in the low to mid 20s and continuing light S/SW winds.

OUTLOOK: Predominantly high pressure will return to North Idaho with partly sunny skies on Saturday, temperatures reaching into the high 20s and possibly low 30s with light winds out of the south. Clouds return in the evening but temperatures remain below freezing and SW winds picking up. By Sunday a 30% chance of ½ and inch of snow or less exists and moderate winds out of the west. **The avalanche danger is decreasing but could increase again on Sunday with windloading from the expected weather.**

Selkirks and Cabinet mountains: We found the 12/15 buried surface hoar layer on numerous aspects but not as widespread as expected, so I'll tell you where we didn't find it. On exposed slopes and ridgetops above 5,500 feet and steep southerly aspects the surface hoar was either melted or blown over. Where we did find it it was buried intact under 3-6 inches of very light snow. Stress tests on the surface hoar yielded no results, nor did we see or feel any movement as we traveled. Because of the high pressure and cold temps the pack above the thick ice crust from around Thanksgiving is very loose and faceted with a couple potential weak layers. These layers will be weakest where buried more deeply by windloading. Snow depth is about 4-05 feet. Avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE** on windloaded aspects steeper than 35 degrees above 5,000 feet. The avalanche danger as LOW on non wind-loaded slopes less than 35 degrees.

2 Moderate		Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify features of concern	Natural avalanches unlikely; human-triggered avalanches possible.	Small avalanches in specific areas; or large avalanches in isolated areas.
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St. Regis Basin and Silver valley: In the St. Regis Basin Dan and Carole found 81 cm of total snow with 6 cm of new snow. They did not find surface hoar in their travels but I would assume that it is present on some slopes, especially where sheltered. In their pit tests they revealed a very loose and faceted snowpack, indicating an overall weak structure. Shear tests on weak layers near the surface showed that they are not under stress due to the light snow that fell in the last 48 hours. It is worth noting that weaker layers buried about 4-6 inches could become a problem with heavier snow accumulations in the future. Snow depth is about 3 feet. Avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE** on windloaded aspects steeper than 35 degrees above 5,000 feet. The avalanche danger as LOW on non wind-loaded slopes less than 35 degrees.

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In your travels today watch steep wind-loaded and wind-hardened snow. Since wind and sun have knocked down the buried surface hoar on mountain tops, ridges, and steep south aspects you will find a more stable snowpack there. Be aware that buried surface hoar is isolated to aspects sheltered from the sun and wind. Be more cautious climbing up to or descending from the top of N,NE,E, and SE slopes since they will be more windloaded.

The next avalanche advisory will be issued December 23rd. Ed will begin forecasting for the St. Joe's next week.

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Have a safe and pleasant weekend!!!!

